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Letter dated 7 November 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention further acts of vandalism and desecration against holy places of worship in the northern part of Cyprus, which is under Turkish occupation.

In a letter dated 29 August 1995, we brought to your attention acts of desecration committed against the Churches of Our Saviour in Akanthou and of Panayia Evangelistria in Karavas. Attention was also drawn to the vandalism at the cemeteries of the Church of Our Saviour in Akanthou and at the occupation village of Gypsou. New information has been brought to our attention indicating that the desecration and vandalism of holy places of worship in the occupied part of Cyprus continues.

The Church of Agios Georgios in the occupied village of Voucolida has been taken over by a family of illegal settlers from mainland Turkey who use the church as their residence.

The Church of Agios Haralambos and the cemetery of Neon Horion Kythreas have been vandalized.

Such acts of desecration and vandalism committed against churches and monasteries in the part of Cyprus occupied by Turkey since 1974 have been repeatedly brought to the attention of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) over the last 21 years since the Turkish invasion and occupation. Unfortunately, the protests of the Government of Cyprus have led to no firm action taken, aimed at stopping the systematic destruction, vandalism and desecration of the cultural heritage in the occupied part of Cyprus. As a result, the Turkification of the northern part of the island continues unabated and unchallenged under the very eyes of the United Nations.

As we noted in our letter to you of 29 August 1995, there should be ways and means by which the illegal authorities in the occupied part of Cyprus can be prevented, even at this late stage, from implementing their policies of erasing all traces of cultural heritage of a civilization of millennia. In that letter we further noted that the ethnic cleansing that Turkey pursued in 1974-1975 in the northern part of Cyprus by forcibly expelling 200,000 Greek Cypriots and turning them into refugees in their own country was the first step for a policy of the Turkification of the occupied part of the island. The second step is the destruction of the cultural heritage, a policy that is being implemented so far with impunity. It is time for the United Nations to intervene effectively, through UNFICYP, to stop the Turkification of the part of Cyprus occupied by Turkey by ensuring the protection of the cultural heritage going back to the dawn of history.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 55 and 112, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nicos AGATHOCLEOUS
Permanent Representative of
the Republic of Cyprus to
the United Nations